

Updated Monday 20 October 2014

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY HON. NANA OYE LITHUR,  
MINISTER FOR GENDER, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION, AT THE  
59<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN  
GENEVA 20<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER - 7 NOVEMBER, 2014**

**The Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,  
Members of the Committee,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is indeed a privilege for me, as the Leader of the Ghanaian delegation, and for the members of my delegation, to participate in the proceedings of the 59th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

I bring you greetings from the Government and People of Ghana.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Development context and priorities of development goals**

Chairperson,

Ghana prioritises its development goals in its national governance framework. Ghana has ratified the core international human rights instruments: the 1949 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights. Ghana is also committed to the Beijing Platform for Action agenda, achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and committed to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Ghana acceded to the CEDAW Convention in 1986, and has worked hard on implementing its principles. Today represents a milestone in the integration of CEDAW principles into our national machinery spanning 40 years.

In June 2012, Ghana submitted its Sixth and Seventh Consolidated Periodic Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The Government of Ghana is committed to its obligations under CEDAW and we present to you our response

to the list of issues raised by the Committee. We come here today to actively participate, listen and learn from this experience too.

Ghana is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious country. We are proud of our diversity and it is one of the core strengths of our nation. According to the Census 2010, Ghana's total population was 24.2 Million, with women constituting 51.2 per cent of the population. We have a strong tradition of female-centric cultural practices. Female roles in Ghanaian culture are prominent; women are placed in the centre of community and social structures, dating back to pre-colonial years. Etched into the history of our nation are the stories of women who fought for the Ghana they knew was possible, a country where all are treated equally regardless of gender.

I recall Nana Yaa Asantewaa, a Ghanaian heroine, who led women to fight for the survival of the Ashanti Kingdom in Ghana from British colonial rule. Yaa Asantewaa was the leader and commander-in-chief of the Ashanti independence war and a Queenmother of her hometown. The role Yaa Asantewaa played in the preparation towards the war and the war itself has had a remarkable legacy on Ghana's recognition of the importance of women. Hers is an historical pilgrimage of strength, valour, courage and emotions which Ghanaian women continue to exemplify.

Our founding father, Kwame Nkrumah, was the first African president to introduce affirmative action policy when he introduced the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1960, which provided for 10 women to join the National Assembly. Since then, women continue to be actively encouraged to participate in national politics and governance.

### **Constitutional, Legislative and Institutional Framework**

Chairperson,

Article 17 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana fundamentally guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination. Article 35(5) of the Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy) obliges the State to prohibit discrimination and prejudice on grounds including gender and further requires the State, in Article 35(6), to achieve reasonable regional and gender balance in recruitment and appointment to public offices.

This directive has in the past led to the adoption of policy measures and directives. We recognise, however, the need to legislate on equality for women, in the interest of securing

their fundamental human rights and to boost their essential contribution to national development.

The Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA) – the national medium-term development policy framework – provides the overall framework for improving the participation of women in key sectors of the economy, as well as putting in place measures to bridge the inequality gap between men and women.

The GSGDA therefore provides broad policy guidelines and strategic direction on increasing the role of women in existing sectors of the economy such as agriculture and emerging areas like the energy, oil and gas sectors.

Chairperson,

In a 2011 report of the Constitution Review Commission (CRC) recommended that Article 7 of the Constitution – which governs citizenship by marriage – be made gender neutral.<sup>1</sup> This recommendation has been accepted by the Government in its White Paper on the CRC’s Report<sup>2</sup>. Citizenship is gender neutral under the Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2014.

### **Restructure of national machinery**

To further strengthen the realisation of women’s rights and to better coordinate the provision of services to women, among others, the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs (MOWAC) was restructured in 2013 and re-designated as the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) by Executive Instrument (E.I) 1. The new Ministry is a merger of MOWAC, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), the National Council on Persons with Disability (NCPD) and the Social Protection Division of the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (MESW).

Consequently the new MoGCSP has assumed a new and expanded mandate to ensure gender equality, promote the welfare and protection of children, and to empower the vulnerable, excluded, the aged and persons with disabilities, for sustainable national development. The Ministry’s core values are integrity, excellence and social justice, and its vision is for a

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<sup>1</sup>Constitution Review Commission (2011) p 639 para 53.

<sup>2</sup>White Paper on the Report of the Constitution Review Commission presented to the President, p 42.

harmonious society in which the survival and development of the sexes, children, the vulnerable, and persons with disability are guaranteed.

In terms of strengthening the legal and policy framework on gender, the Ministry has submitted to Parliament for promulgation of the Property Rights of Spouses and the Intestate Succession Bills; and Legislative Instruments to the Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Acts of 2005.

Policy developments include the institutionalisation of Social Protection and an ongoing review of the National Gender Policy. Our Judiciary has also made significant contributions into the protection of women's property rights, as guaranteed in Article 22 of the 1992 Constitution. In the decision of Mensah v Mensah, the Supreme Court has firmly established the principle of equality in property distribution, in the instant case that contribution to the property of acquired within a marriage was to be apportioned 50% to each spouse.

The Ministry, in collaboration Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the National Development Planning Committee, has established gender responsive budgeting in all ministries, departments and agencies and the Gender Responsive Budgeting Technical Working Committee has been constituted to oversee gender mainstreaming in sector policies and budgets. Training manuals on mainstreaming gender into planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation at the district levels have been developed and training of officers is ongoing.

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP) is sponsoring the Affirmative Action Bill on which consultations are currently being held, prior to its submission to Cabinet for approval.

### **National machinery for the advancement of women**

The new MoGCSP oversees the national machinery for the advancement of women. In spite of the expansion of MOWAC to MoGCSP, the budgetary allocations still remain under 1 per cent of the total national budget. In 2013, MoGCSP was allocated GH¢53,382,672 in the Annual Budget Estimates to implement its programmes. This comprised the following:

- a) GH¢38,166,022 representing the total GOG approved annual budget;
- b) GH¢14,966,650 representing the total budget from donors; and

c) GH¢250,000 representing Internally Generated Funds (IGF).

Out of the total, the Ministry received **GH¢29,826,481 (56%)** for the implementation of its programmes, leaving a variance of **GH¢18,797,238**.

For the 2014 fiscal year, the Ministry has been allocated **GH¢91,038,708** under the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) estimates. While we are receiving incremental increases in our budget allocation each year, there is still a notable variance between allocation and disbursement.

In pursuit of effective implementation of its expanded mandate and to enhance human capacity, MoGCSP has engaged the services of the Management Services Division (MSD) in the Office of the Head of Civil Service (OHCS) to undertake a restructuring exercise involving the development of a new organisational structure and performance management framework to improve the operations of MoGCSP, facilitate the revision of job descriptions for staff, and ensure that each directorate, department and division of the Ministry has competent staff to carry out its functions.

The Ministry has also drawn up an Agenda for Change which sets out its new vision and direction and how they fit into the national developmental agenda, along with a five-year Strategic Development Plan. Together it is expected that these measures would enhance the performance and delivery of staff on MoGCSP's outputs.

Since the launch of the Gender Responsive Skills and Community Development Project (GRSCDP) in November 2009, 1,534 officers were trained by the Institute for Local Government Studies (ILGS) on strategies to mainstream gender into planning under the GRSCDP. Participants included officers from the Department of Gender, Home Science Instructors of the Department of Community Development (DCD), staff of AfDB-funded projects, District Planning Coordinating Units (DPCU) of the 59 beneficiary Districts, and staff of MMDAs, including Gender Desk Officers.

MoGCSP has also developed the Gender Analysis Framework and Planning Templates to guide DPCUs and the inclusion of gender in planning processes for poverty reduction, local economic development, agriculture and infrastructural development at the local level.

## **Access to justice**

Cost is a major challenge for persons seeking to use the formal court processes to access justice.

To address this, Community Mediation Centres (CMC) have been introduced. The CMCs handle civil cases such as tenancy issues, employment disputes, family conflicts, maintenance and custody of children and such minor criminal cases that are permitted under the law such as assaults, acts tending to disturb peace, neglect of dependants and cases referred by the police, the courts and other social service providers. The objective of the CMCs is to offer an alternative to adversarial, cumbersome and expensive means of conflict resolution to improve access to justice for all people within the community and to create awareness about mediation centres as a preferred alternative to the centres.

In 2012, Ghana's Legal Aid Scheme handled over 8,500 cases of which 65% were cases addressing the rights of women and children. In 2013, at least 8,960 cases were handled with a similar proportion of women and children's matters.

Other legal aid services are provided for women who cannot afford legal fees. The Human Rights Advocacy Centre (HRAC), the Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE), the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), the Ark Foundation, and Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) provide various types of legal aid services in order to facilitate women's access to justice.

Between 2008 and April 2014, the HRAC provided 2,905 clients pro bono legal services, most of them for women and children who were not in the position pay. One hundred and seventy-four (174) pro bono lawyers were involved in these legal aid services offered by the HRAC.

From January to December 2010, the FIDA-Ghana Accra office dealt with cases that ranged from maintenance, paternity, estate, marital/matrimonial, and issues/custody, among others. The centre was able to address 1331 cases consisting of 416 new cases and 915 old cases (recorded in the table above). The bulk of the cases were marital (493) cases representing 37%, estate (308) or 23%, and then maintenance (287) or 22%. The next most

reported cases included legal advice (156) or 12%, referrals (74) or 5%, and compensation (13) or 1%.<sup>3</sup>

### **Temporary special measures**

Under the GSGDA, a National Employment Policy (2012 – 2016) has been adopted and implemented. One of the strategies of the policy is the mainstreaming of vulnerable groups, including women, into national employment programmes. These include:

- the elimination of impediments to women’s access to productive employment opportunities,
- increasing education and training in entrepreneurship, and business management,
- skills training and confidence building;
- encouraging women to go into high income earning activities including cash crop farming, agro-processing, horticulture production for export, and ICT.

In the education sector, the Pre-Tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management Policy was developed in January 2012, setting professional standards, codes of practice and ethics, and registration and licensing of teachers in Ghana. There are currently over 12,000 untrained teachers enrolled in the Untrained Teachers Diploma in Basic Education (UTBE) programme. Another measure includes National In-Service Training (INSET) to enhance skills of teachers in various specialties. 3,086 kindergarten teachers, 13,264 primary school teachers and 6,543 junior high school teachers are in professional development programmes.<sup>4</sup>

### **Stereotypes and Harmful Practices**

Ghana has come a long way in combating negative sexual stereotypes and traditional practices. Legislative interventions such as the amendment of the Intestate Succession Law and the introduction of a Property Rights of Spouses Bill, which are currently before Parliament, are intended to combat negative cultural practices which subjugate women’s rights to inheritance, in lines with Article 22 of the Constitution. In 1994, the Criminal Code, 1960,

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fidaghana.org/fida-ghana-annual-report-2010/>

<sup>4</sup> [www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/2012-02-08-08-24-49/ministry-of-education](http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/2012-02-08-08-24-49/ministry-of-education)

was amended to include the offence of female circumcision, in line with Article 39(2) of the Constitution.

The Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) has sustained a vigorous campaign in opposition to injurious and dehumanising cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, widowhood rites, forced marriages, ritual servitude, maltreatment of women accused of witchcraft, as well as other violent practices that subject women and girls to cruel treatment.

The Ministry is partnering with UNICEF, with funding from the Netherlands, to address early and forced marriage in a project that will involve annual national dialogues with traditional leaders through the National House of Chiefs and Minister of Chieftaincy Affairs. The dialogue with traditional leaders is to harness the capacity to prevent early marriage in the communities as custodians of cultural norms. The first of these three dialogues will set the stage for action and we envisage this will provide a platform for addressing other harmful cultural practices. The project is focused on the following key results:

- a) Establishing a national strategic framework and coordinating mechanism for eliminating incidence of early and forced marriage and its related consequences such as teenage pregnancy;
- b) Increase preventative action by traditional leaders, religious bodies and communities;
- c) Strengthen support to young girls who escape the practice through the provision of safe and secure shelters.

In recent years the Government has been increasingly proactive in addressing the issue of witchcraft accusations in Ghana. Particular measures taken to address the phenomenon include the following:

1. Awareness-raising programmes on the camps and their harmful effects on women by the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE);
2. Comprehensive research on the camps by the NCCE;
3. Development of a roadmap on eliminating the camps by Action Aid-Ghana and the Go Home Project of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana working on camps. The roadmap has been handed over to the MoGCSP, which is currently determining how best to strengthen the collaboration towards removing the camps. The Ministry is thus working with the partners mentioned here to identify camps for closure.

4. Attempts to improve the living conditions of those accused of witchcraft living within the camps through:
  - a) cash transfers under LEAP
  - b) provision of basic needs such as food, potable water, sleeping arrangements (re-roofing of huts) and medical screening
  - c) construction of a vocational skills training institute for the Gambaga camp and its surrounding communities by the Lordina Foundation.

Notwithstanding this effort, MoGCSP is working progressively on reintegrating the alleged witches in their home villages. This process is more sustainable and promotes the rights of the women to live freely. A roadmap has also been developed to facilitate the reintegration process. The media has been very instrumental in educating the public about the situations of the women in the camps.

Two years after the implementation of the reintegration roadmap, 132 alleged witches have already been reintegrated into their communities. Some challenges have, however, been encountered in the reintegration process as some community members find it difficult to accept the women, and as a result will require increased sensitisation to aid the process. I refer to Ghana's Sixth and Seventh Country Report for further data on the number of camps and occupants.

Recognising that children and women with mental health issues are at increased risk of accusations, there is an expectation that the passage of the Mental Health Act, 2012 (Act 846) on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012 and the establishment of the Mental Health Authority in 2013 will help to address some of the underlying issues surrounding witchcraft accusations.

### **Violence Against Women**

Chairperson, violence against women is a critical area of concern to the government of Ghana, and as a result measures have been taken to address it. Efforts have been made at strengthening the legal and institutional framework on violence against women.

The Domestic Violence Act works together with the Criminal Offences Act (revised in 2007) under which marital rape is an offence. Marital rape is criminalised pursuant to a repeal of section 42(g) by the Statute Revisions Act.

Government has enacted laws that promote the welfare and protection of women and families, including:

- Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694),
- Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732),
- Matrimonial Causes Act, 1971 (Act 367),
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Amendment Act (Act 484)
- Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715).

The MoGCSP has finalised the Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence Regulations with the Attorney-General's Department to facilitate the implementation of their respective Acts and improve the protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of human trafficking victims.

The Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) resolved 826 gender-related cases between 2011 and 2013 and referred 155. Records of the Domestic Violence Victims' Support Unit (DOVVSU), established within the Ghana Police Service, indicate that between 2011 and 2013, 54,415 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were reported to DOVVSU and 15,885 cases of assault were also reported in the same year. A number of steps have been taken to enhance the capacity of state agencies to address violence and abuse against women.

With the assistance of DFID, a consultant team is being established to undertake a national research on the prevalence, incidence, nature and key drivers of domestic violence in Ghana. This aims to provide up-to-date national data and information for use as a baseline for measuring progress on the issue going forward, and to strengthen the knowledge base on the nature and extent of domestic violence that can be used to assess the situation in relation to achieving MDG 3, as well as advancing legal, policy and programmatic interventions.

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection has recently hosted a workshop on the development of intra and inter-agency protocols to guide and ensure an effective response to domestic violence cases. The objective is to review and propose guidelines for the development of the intra- and inter-agency protocols to ensure a more holistic and integrated response system to victims of domestic violence and minimise system-induced re-traumatisation of victims of gender-based-violence.

Since 2009, government agencies with mandates to prevent all forms of violence against women have made considerable efforts in various advocacy and awareness creation initiatives to communicate and mobilise community members to address violence against children. The

Departments of Social Development, Gender, and Children of the MoGCSP alone have interacted with over 250,000 people in about 250 communities across the entire country on violence against women and children.

The Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Domestic Violence and Victim Support and Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTU) of the Ghana Police Service, Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Ghana Health Service have also engaged with various communities on violence against women. The essence of these programmes is to increase publicity and awareness on violence against women and its effects. A number of steps have been taken to enhance the capacity of State agencies to address violence and abuse against women.

### **Trafficking in women and exploitation of prostitution**

The Human Trafficking Secretariat of the MoGCSP has recently inaugurated the Human Trafficking Management Board and the Board has identified key strategic priorities in addressing human trafficking in Ghana. The Board is mandated to make recommendations for a national plan of action against human trafficking, monitor and report on the progress of the national plan of action, through the Minister to the Economic Community of West African States Secretariat; advise the Minister on policy matters under the Act; and provide assistance on the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases.

In addition, the Board is mandated to propose and promote strategies to prevent and combat trafficking in persons; liaise with government agencies and organisations to promote the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of trafficking; prepare guidelines for disbursements from the Fund; conduct research on international and regional developments and standards on trafficking in persons; and deal with any matter concerned with human trafficking.

The trafficking of children is prevalent internally. Girls, especially, are forced into labour, domestic servitude, head portering (kayayei), street hawking and prostitution. Boys are trafficked for fishing, mining, and quarrying. Trafficking for agricultural labour is reducing due to ILO and ECOWAS Projects.

For men, cross-border trafficking or migrant smuggling is connected with fraudulent recruitment agencies, including construction work. Ghanaian women and children are also trafficked for forced labour and sex trafficking. Some women and girls voluntarily migrating to

Ghana under the expectation of legitimate employment opportunities have been subjected to commercial sexual exploitation upon arrival.

The key obstacles to implementation of the Human Trafficking Act are mainly:

- a) Ineffective collaborative mechanisms to fight trafficking
- b) Inadequate Government budgetary allocation to carry out mandated activities in the Human Trafficking Act by MoGCSP and within its Human Trafficking Secretariat
- c) AHTU officials are the only state officials mandated to prosecute trafficking cases yet their limited resources hamper government's ability to adequately address the number of cases brought to the Unit each year.

In 2012, the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit identified about 409 trafficking victims. Support continued in finding a shelter for trafficking victims. In May 2011, 232 Ghanaian law enforcement officials working with agents from INTERPOL carried out a three-part operation against child trafficking. Although there is no formal protocol for referral of cases, AHTU was able to refer some of the 409 trafficking victims identified in 2012 to Government and NGO-run facilities for protective care.

In all the AHTU, Ghana Immigration Service (GIS), and the Economic and Organised Crime Office (EOCO) identified 91 suspected trafficking cases in 2012. The AHTU was able to secure the conviction of 29 traffickers, marking an increase of four convictions over that of 2011.

### **Participation in Political and Public Life**

Chairperson, the Government and the people of Ghana recognise the participation and representation of women in public life and in particular politics as key to the development of Ghana.

The Affirmative Action Bill is currently in its second draft form, having received comments on it from the Attorney-General's Department. Workshops with key stakeholders are currently underway to finalise the second draft and move the Bill towards finalisation and submission to Cabinet, with an expectation that this will be concluded by the end of this year.

For the first time in Ghana's history there have been an unprecedented number of appointments of women to key top public offices. This has been done under the leadership of His Excellency President John Mahama. At the highest level of Government, women make up

29 percent of Ministers, 23 percent of Deputy Ministers, 16 percent of Chief Directors and eight percent of District/Municipal/Metropolitan Chief Executives. High-level appointments include the Chief Justice, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Office of the President, the Commissioner on Human Rights, Chairperson of NCCE, Director General of Ghana Prisons, Director General of the Ghana AIDS Commission, Controller and Accountant General, and Government Statistician.

The National and Regional Houses of Chiefs have begun the process of fully integrating Queenmothers into both Houses. The National and Regional Houses of Chiefs are vested with powers and given functions under the Constitution to regulate matters of customary law and practice. There has also been established 10 Regional Associations of Paramount Queenmothers in the 10 administrative Regions of Ghana.

The inclusion of Queenmothers therefore marks a significant step in strengthening their role in national and traditional governance and as women in leadership and decision-making.

## **Education**

Chairperson, education is a priority of the Government of Ghana. Government is working to improve the quality of education, especially at the basic level, and the gender gap in school enrolment has been narrowing in recent years. The current literacy rate for women stands at 68.5% for women as compared to men at 80.2%. However, the gender parity index on general enrolment in schools increased from 0.85 in 2009/2010 to 0.91 in 2013/14. The proportion of girls enrolled rose from 44.7% in 2009/10 to 46.9% in 2013/14. The 2014 Education Sector Performance Report indicated that the transition rate from junior high school (third year) to senior high school (first year) increased from 61% to 68%, suggesting more students are completing junior high school are entering senior high school. The rate is higher for female than male students by 2 percentage points (at 69% and 67% respectively).

The percentage of women enrolled in public tertiary institutions has been rising in recent years.

In 2012/13, 33.6 percent of public university students were female, 33.1 percent of polytechnic students, and 43.3 percent of Colleges of Education students were female.

To bridge the gender gap in access to education, a total of 15,700 girls from junior high schools have benefited from scholarships through the Participatory Approach to Student Success. Under the Gender Responsive Skills and Community Development Project (GRSCDP),

MoGCSP granted scholarships to 668 girls from 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 academic years, and presented equipment to government vocational institutions.

Under the Secondary Education Improvement Project approved by Parliament on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2014, 10,400 senior high school students, of which 60% will be girls, will receive scholarships over a three-year period. Adolescent girls in senior high school and students from low income families in Ghana will benefit from the scholarship package. This is to ensure they are supported by the Government of Ghana to remain in school and complete their secondary education successfully.

The World Food Programme is supporting the Ghana Education Service to provide take-home rations to girls in food-insecure regions where there is notable gender disparity. The programme encourages enrolment and retention of girls in the schools. The World Food Programme states that there are currently 30,000 girls in 521 schools in Northern and Volta Regions receiving food rations, and note such programmes have been cited as contributing to why the Upper East and Upper West regions were the first in Ghana to bridge the gender gap at the primary school level.<sup>5</sup>

The Capitation Grant and the National School Feeding Program are aimed at reducing the burden on poor women, especially single mothers and widows. For the 2012/2013 academic year, GHC24,472,840 was released by the Ministry of Education as capitation grants for 5,741,198 pupils in public basic schools. The Ministry further subsidised the registration cost of 391,079 candidates for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) totaling GHC9,031,338.

Over 1.6 million pupils are fed with one hot nutritious meal on every school day. Along with the capitation grant, the abolition of school fees and the provision of free school uniforms and exercise books in disadvantaged regions, school enrolment, attendance and retention has increased by 80 percent.

## **Employment**

The current version of the Ghana Government's policy on the oil industry makes reference to the issue of gender, stating that 'while government will provide equal opportunities for all

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/stories/scholarships-empower-girls-ghana-1>

citizens of the Republic of Ghana, the participation of women in the oil and gas industry will be actively encouraged.’

Apart from the oil industry, the manufacturing sector has also witnessed efforts to improve women’s participation in the sector. Within one and a half years of launching and implementing the Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW) programme, over 88,908 people have so far been employed under the Program, with 52,177 being women. Alternative livelihood programs (such as soap making) have been initiated by MoGCSP and other NGOs for poor women such as head porters.

## **Health**

Chairperson, it is the vision of the Government of Ghana to extend quality health care to all our people irrespective of one’s status in society or geographical location.

Government is bringing healthcare to the doorsteps of our people, even in the remotest of locations.

The 2009 Health Sector Gender Policy recognises the need for a health sector response. Policy measures include collaboration with key stakeholders to create awareness; and the development of protocols or management of victims of gender-based violence and ensure collection of information across various sectors.

We have also been engaged in an aggressive rollout of Community Health Improvement Compounds [CHPS]. The compounds are staffed with trained nurses, midwives, and other auxiliary health personnel. They are located in rural and peri-urban communities, and they provide basic healthcare services including antenatal care to pregnant women.

Trends in the maternal mortality ratio in Ghana have shown a consistent decline since 1990. Ghana Statistical Service surveys record a significant shift from a high rate of 740 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990, maternal mortality reduced to 451 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2007. Ghana’s Population and Housing Census recorded a rate of 485 in 2010. Data from UNICEF indicates a fall from 470 in 2005 to 380 in 2013.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [http://data.unicef.org/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded\\_pdfs/corecode/MMR2013\\_117.pdf](http://data.unicef.org/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded_pdfs/corecode/MMR2013_117.pdf)

The Community-Based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) are also playing a prominent role in Ghana's steadily decreasing maternal mortality numbers. Access to healthcare in rural areas has increased with CHPS services increasing from 868 in 2009 to 1,675 in 2011.

Another positive result is the drop in institutional neonatal mortality from 5.8 per 1000 live births in 2012 to 2.3 per 1000 today. The average neonatal maternal mortality is also decreasing steadily. These are not just numbers; they represent human lives. These improvements mean that more babies are surviving childbirth and more mothers' lives are being saved.

From 2013 to 2014, fistula repairs have been arranged by MoGCSP for sixty eight (68) women from the Upper East, Upper West, Volta and Central Regions of Ghana, in collaboration with a team of doctors at the Mercy Health Centre, Mankessim. Beneficiaries have also received assistance to reintegrate into their society.

When it comes to saving lives, Ghana has been successful in its efforts in the area of HIV and AIDS. The prevalence rate for HIV and AIDS continues to decline and currently stands at 1.37%. The proportion of women living with HIV/AIDS is 57% compared to 43% of men. While there has been a reduction in the prevalence, the proportion of women to men remains the same. The Ghana AIDS Commission continues to work towards implementation of the 5-year strategic plan. The plan envisions a 50% reduction in new infections by 2015, virtual elimination of mother-to-child transmission and the placement of more infected persons on antiretroviral therapies. The estimated number of mothers in need of Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT) reduced from 10,762 in 2011 to 9,479 in 2012 and 8,907 in 2013. At the recent Lancet Commission Conference of HIV and AIDS in London, H.E John Dramani Mahama championed the cause of building local capacity in the African Pharmaceutical industry for the production of antiretroviral therapies.

The Government of Ghana is putting in more measures to make sure that the health needs of women and children are well catered for, including the finalisation of the National HIV and AIDS, STI Policy in 2013 and the 2014 Ghana AIDS Commission Bill which is now ready for Cabinet.

## **Ebola and maternal health**

I would like to take this opportunity to make a note of the impact of the recent ebola outbreak in West Africa on women. Traditionally, women are the primary care givers and represent a higher proportion of health workers.

As such, the rate of infection of ebola in women is possibly up to 75% in Liberia and 55% to 60% in Sierra Leone. Compounding this are reports of pregnant and post-natal mothers presenting with complications from their pregnancy or malaria who are failing to receive adequate treatment due to the pressure on clinics dealing with the ebola outbreak.

Ghana is hosting the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) and has also put in place its Ebola Preventive Response, holding a two-day national workshop to strengthen the country's preparedness and response to any unexpected outbreak of ebola.

## **Rural women**

To improve women's access to and control over productive resources, the block farming program of MOFA targets women and youth. The program aims at increasing farmers' access to land, improved seeds, fertilizers and extension services. Land allocation is facilitated and improved seeds and fertilizer provided on credit. After production, farmers pay back in kind or cash. In 2012 total beneficiaries were 18,782 of which 18.9% were female beneficiaries. In 2013 a total number of 13,425 farmers benefited with 18.6% female beneficiaries.

## **Social Protection and poverty reduction**

**Chairperson,** Ghana is on track to achieving ahead of time the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 target of reducing by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty at the national level, and in rural and urban areas.

The national proportion of people living below the poverty line halved between 1991/92 and 2005/06, decreasing from 36.5 per cent to 18.2 per cent.

The national proportion of people living below the upper poverty line was 51.7 per cent in 1991/1992 and has decreased to 24.2 per cent. The extreme poverty rate has decreased to 8.4% from 16.5% in 2005/06. The poverty gap ratio in Ghana has continued to decline

from 36 in 1991/92 to 34 in 2005/06 with a trend indicating a decline to approximately 25 in 2014.

In order to tackle extreme poverty and achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the government has, in recent years, adopted a number of initiatives, including the launch of the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) in 2007. The strategy represents the Government of Ghana's vision of creating an all-inclusive society through the provision of sustainable mechanisms for the protection of persons living in situations of extreme poverty, vulnerability and exclusion.

To strengthen the country's social protection system, MoGCSP, in conjunction with the Ministries of Health, Education, Food and Agriculture, and Local Government and Rural Development, are developing a National Targeting System (NTS) and Household Registry to be used by all government agencies in identifying, selecting and prioritising households living in vulnerable conditions. The NTS is targeting the following social intervention programmes:

- Livelihood Against Poverty (LEAP) programme managed by MoGCSP;
- Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW)
- Pro-poor interventions for poor peasant farmers including block farming
- Free school uniform and exercise books, implemented under Ministry of Education
- School Feeding Programme, under Ministry of Local Government;
- Local Enterprise and Skills Development Programme (LESDEP); and
- National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) and Ghana Youth Employment and Enterprise Development Programme.

At the close of 2013, LEAP which is the nation's flagship social intervention programme was covering 72,780 households in 100 districts. 66.37 percent of the total number of beneficiaries constitutes women, and 73.7 percent also are women care givers. LEAP 1000 Project, which is a USAID-sponsored programme, focuses on preventing stunting in children aged 0-3 years within the three northern regions. Seven thousand (7000) women will benefit from the project.

Within in one and a half years of implementation, over 88,908 people have so far been employed under the Labour Intensive Public Works programme, with 52,177 (59%) being women.

Ghana's social protection strategies are gender sensitive, specifically targeting regions where human trafficking and kayeyei are endemic.

## **CHALLENGES**

### **Harmful traditional practices**

Allegations of witchcraft are highly gendered, with older females, widows, childless or unmarried women bearing the brunt of the scourge due to strongly-held customary beliefs about such women not meeting certain gender stereotypes. However, the issue is complex, intersecting with mental health and domestic violence issues and manifests differently across the varied regions in the country. This makes it difficult to come up with a singular solution and requires an integrated, long-term multi-sectoral framework.

### **Data collection and reporting**

A significant hindrance to being able to report with more clarity on Ghana's advancement and development in relation to the Convention is data collection for consistent ongoing reporting. This is evident in areas such as human trafficking and domestic violence. The challenge is affected by the political and development environment. Too often, surveys are undertaken, which provide an initial data set but there is no follow-up and thus no comparison can be made between the initial data set and future points in time.

To combat this, the Ministry is resourcing its Research, Statistics and Information Management (RSIM) Directorate to finalise the establishment of a Management Information System with a focus on gender-related data to enhance generation, analysis and accessibility of relevant data for policy development, programming and decision-making.

The Ministry has also commenced preparations for its involvement in the Ghana Statistics Development Project, which will enhance the capacity of the Ministry and its partner institutions to collect and coordinate data and statistics and to match its progress against the post-2015 development goals and other benchmarks.

Work has also commenced on creating a database of microfinance institutions and women's groups to ensure sustainable microeconomic stability.

## CONCLUSION

**Madam Chairperson,** there are challenges of financial, human and material resource constraints as well as structural limitations still to be addressed. The progress made so far would not have been possible without the political commitment, support from all stakeholders, including Civil Society Organizations and our Development Partners.

Chairperson,

In this opening statement, I hope to have touched on a number of the issues that I am sure will be raised and discussed throughout the day. I hope I have given you a summary of the Government of Ghana's commitment to ending all forms of discrimination against women and assured you of our commitment under CEDAW.

Once again, we are delighted to be here with you today and welcome the opportunity to learn from you and discuss further with you, our progress to tackle discrimination against women.

Thank you.

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